The reductive thesis of human identity estranges persons from their own ontological horizons. This estrangement ends any meaningful capacity to engage and interact with the ethical force of any other person. **TAYLOR:**[[1]](#footnote-1)So runs a currently persuasive argument in favour of the reductive thesis. And this is precisely the thesis I oppose. I want to defend the strong thesis that horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include these strong qualitative discriminations. Moreover, this is not meant just as a contingently true psychological fact about human beings, which could perhaps turn out one day not to hold for some exceptional individual or new type, some superman of disengaged objectification. Rather the claim is that living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood. Perhaps the best way to see this is to focus on the issue that we usually describe today as the question of identity. We speak of it in these terms because the question is often spontaneously phrased by people in the form: Who am I? But this can’t necessarily be answered by giving name and genealogy. What does answer this question for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined bythe commitments and identificationswhich provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand. People may see their identity as defined partly by some moral or spiritual commitment, say as a Catholic, or an anarchist. They may define it in part by the nation or tradition they belong to, as an Armenian, say, or a Quebecois. What they are saying by this is not just that they are strongly attached to this spiritual view or background; rather it is that this provides the frame within which they can determine where they stand on question of what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value. Put counterfactually, they are saying that were they to lose this commitment or identification they would be at sea, as it were; they wouldn’t know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them. And this situation does, of course, arise for some people. It’s what we call **an ‘identity crisis’**, an acute form of disorientation, which people often express in terms of not knowing who they are, but which **can** also **be seen as a radical uncertainty** of where they stand. **They lack a** frame or **horizon within which things can take on** a **stable significance, within which** some **life possibilities can be seen as good or meaningful, others as bad or trivial.** The meaning of all these possibilities is unfixed, labile, or underdetermined. This is a painful and frightening experience. What this brings to light is the essential link between identity and a kind of orientation. **To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space,** a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance of you and what is trivial and secondary. I feel myself drawn here to use a spatial metaphor; but I believe this to be more than personal predilection. There are signs that the link with spatial orientation lies very deep in the human psyche. In some very extreme cases of what are described as “narcissistic personality disorders”, which take the form of a radical uncertainty about oneself and about what is of value to one, patients show signs of spatial disorientation as well as moments of acute crisis. The disorientation and uncertainty about where one stands as a person seems to spill over into a loss of grip on one’s stance in physical space.

And the endorsement of util further and independently reifies the reductive naturalism. **SHOEMAKER**[[2]](#footnote-2)**:** 7. Conclusion Utilitarians can provide a complete procedure for weighing goodness only by presupposing that persons are not enduring metaphysical units. If they were to do otherwise, by presupposing either a non-reductionist or a moderate reductionist view, they would have to allow for the possible generation of holistic goods, goods which cannot be represented by the same utility functions used in other contexts. Their theory would then be one in which the same utility functions would not represent quantities of goodness in every context and they would thus be unable to assess total goodness. As a result, they must deny the very possibility of holistic goods, and the only view of persons allowing them to do so is extreme reductionism, a position in which experiencers are viewed as having the same temporal existence as their dated, momentary experiences. There is a metaphysical problem and a pragmatic, psychological problem with viewing persons in this way. On the one hand, the slide from non-reductionism to extreme reductionism about identity and unity is not warranted. Moderate reductionism provides a substitute for the alleged further fact in the form of psychological connectedness. Such connectedness can provide a metaphysical unity formerly thought provided by the further fact. On the other hand, in order to have any reason to act at all, we must conceive ourselves as enduring and unified entities to some extent, and moderate reductionism lends plausible metaphysical reinforcement to this pragmatic conception of ourselves that extreme reductionism does not. All of this leads to an ironic conclusion**.** Parfit argues thathis form ofreductionism makes utilitarianism more plausiblethan it would have been if non-reductionism were accepted, which is indeed the case. Extreme reductionism, after all, is still one possible version of Parfit’s form of reductionism**.** The much more plausiblespecification of Parfit’s form **of** reductionism**,** however, is moderate reductionism, and thisversion of his view ultimatelyprovides a very serious reason to doubt utilitarianism.**34**

The ontological structure of the person precedes other questions. Until we situate the human person, violence and domination can be inflicted on others without adequate justification. It’s a recognition of ontology that explains why the racist would require an impossible justification for their racism. If your ontology is wrong, you risk even a right ethic being applied in a way that excludes the marginalized. **TAYLOR (2)**[[3]](#footnote-3): But this neat division cannot be carried through. Ontological accounts offer themselves as correct articulations of our 'gut' reactions of respect. In this they treat these reactions as different from other 'gut' responses, such as our taste for sweets or our nausea at certain smells or objects. We don't acknowledge that there is something there to articulate, as we do in the moral case. Is this distinction illegitimate? A metaphysical invention? It seems to turn on this: in either case **our response is to an object with a certain property**. But in one case **the property marks the object as** one **meriting this reaction**; in the other the connection between the two is just a brute fact. Thus we argue and reason over what and who is a fit object of moral respect, while this doesn't seem to be even possible for a reaction like nausea. Of course we can reason that it might be useful or convenient to alter the boundaries of what we feel nausea at; and we might succeed, with training, in doing so. But what seems to make no sense here is the supposition that we might articulate a description of the nauseating in terms of its intrinsic properties, and then argue &om this that certain things which we in fact react to that way are not really fit objects for it. There seems to be no other criterion for a concept of the nauseating than our in fact reacting with nausea to the things which bear the concept. As against the first kind of response, which relates to a proper object, this one could be called a brute reaction. Assimilating our moral reactions- to these visceral ones would mean considering all our talk about fit objects of moral response to be utterly illusory. The belief that we are discrminating real properties, with criteria independent of our de facto reactions, would be declared unfounded. This is the burden of the so-called 'error theory' of moral values which John Mackie espoused.3 It can combine easily with a sociobiological standpoint, in which one acknowledges that certain moral reactions had (and have) obvious survival value, and one may even propose to. fine-tune and alter our reactions so as to increase th.at value, as above we imagined changing what we feel nausea at. But this would have nothing to do with a view that certain things and not others, just in virtue of their nature, were fit objects of respect. Now this sociobiological or external standpoint is utterly different from the way we in fact argue and reason and deliberate in our moral lives. We are all universalists now about respect for life and integrity. But this means not just that we happen to have such reactions or that we have decided in the light of the present predicament of the human race that it is useful to have such reactions (though some people argue in this way, urging that, for instance, it is in our own interest in a shrinking world to take account of Third World poverty). It means rather that we believe it would be utterly wrong and unfounded to draw the boundaries any narrower than around the whole human race. Should anybody propose to do so, we should immediately ask what distinguished those within from those left out. And we should seize on this distinguishing characteristic in order to show that it has nothing to do with commanding respect. This is what we do with racists. Skin colour or physical traits have nothing to do with that in virtue of which humans command our respect. In fact, no ontological account accords it this. **Racists** have to **claim** that certain of the **crucial moral properties** of human beings **are** genetically **determined**: that some races are **less intelligent; less capable** of high moral consciousness, and the like. The logic of the argument forces them to stake their claim on ground where they are empirically at their weakest. Differences in skin colour are undeniable. But all claims about innate cultural differences are unsustainable in the light of human history. The logic of this whole debate takes intrinsic description seriously, that is, descriptions of the objects of our moral responses whose criteria are independent of our de facto reactions. Can it be otherwise? We feel the demand to be consistent in our moral reactions. And even those philosophers who propose to ignore ontological accounts nevertheless scrutinize and criticize our moral intuitions for their consistency or lack of it. But the issue of consistency presupposes intrinsic description. How could anyone be accused of being inconsistently nauseated? Some description could always be found covering all the objects he reacts to that way, if only the relative one that they all awake his disgust. The issue of consistency can only arise wlten the reaction is related to some independent property as its fit object. . The whole way in which we think, reason, argue, and question ourselves about morality supposes that our moral reactions have these two sides: t . hat they are not only 'gut' feelings but also implicit acknowledgements of lalms concerning their objects. The various ontological accounts try to arnculate these claims. The temptations to deny this, which arise &om modern epistemology, are strengthened by the widespread accptae of a deeply wrong model of practical reasoning,· one based on an tllegItlmate extrapolation from reasoning in natural science. The various ontological accounts attribute predicates to human beings-­ like being creatures of God, or emanations of divine fire, or agents of rational choice-which seem rather analogous to theoretical predicates in natural science, in that they (a) are rather remote from our everyday descriptions by which we deal with people around us and ourselves, and (b) make reference to our conception of the universe and the place we occupy in it. In fact, if we go back before the modern period and tn'e" the thought of Plato, it is clear that the ontological account underlymg the morahty of Just treatment was identical with his 'scientific' theory of the universe. The theory of Ideas underlay one and the other. . It seems natural to assume that we would have to establish these ontological predicates in ways analogous to our supporting physical explanations: starting from the facts identified independently of our reactions to them, we would try to show that one underlying explanation was better than others. But once we do this, we have lost from view what we're arguing about. Ontological accounts have the status of articulations of our moral instincts. They articulate the claims implicit in our reactions. We can no longer argue about them at all once we assume a neutral stance and try to describe the facts as they are independent of these reactions, as we have done in natural science since the seventeenth century. There is such a thing as moral obiectivity, of course. Growth in moral insight often requires that we neutralize some. of our reactions. But this is in order that the others may be identified, unmixed and unscreened by petty jealousy, egoism, or other unworthy feelings. It is never a question of prescinding from our reactions altogether.

The alt is to make sense of moral categories through a self-narrative. That narrative provides a grounding for identity claims that cannot be reduced. The parts only make sense within a story and the story always exists as a totality. **TAYLOR (3):**[[4]](#footnote-4)This array of examples puts us on track of why the absolute question not only can arise but inevitably does arise for us. The issue that recurs in different forms in the above cases is the one I put in terms of the direction of our lives. It concerned our most fundamental motivation, or our basic allegiance, or the outer limits of relevant possibilities for us, and hence the direction our lives were moving in or could move in. Because **our lives move.** Here we connect with another basic feature of human existence. **The issue of our condition can never be exhausted** for us **by what we *are*, because we are always** also changing and ***becoming*.** It is only slowly that **we grow** **through infancy** and childhood **to be autonomous agents** **who have something like our own place relative to the good** at all. And even then, **that place is constantly challenged by the new events** of our lives, **as well as constantly under potential revision**, **as w**e experience more and **mature**. So the issue for us has to be not only where we are, but where we’re going; and though the first may be a matter of more or less, the latter is a question of towards or away from, an issue of yes or no. That is why an absolute question always frames our relative ones. Since we cannot do without an orientation to the good, and since we cannot be indifferent to our place relative to this good, and since this place is something that must always change and become, the issue of direction of our lives must arise for us. Here we connect up with another inescapable feature of human lie. I have bene arguing that in order to make minimal sense of our lives, in order to have an identity, we need an orientation too the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination, of the incomparably higher. Now we see that this sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story. But this is to state another basic condition of making sense of ourselves, that we grasp our lives in a narrative. This has been much discussed recently, and very insightfully. It has often been remarked that making sense of one’s life as a story is also, like orientation to the good, not an optional extra; that our lives exist also in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer. In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going.

explanation of the k:

Extend Taylor (1): Without situating ourselves as unified agents, we lose a sense of ourselves in moral space. Impacts:

a) When we fail to situate ourselves as strongly unified across time, we lose any ability to understand ourselves as situated within certain projects like fighting oppression.

b) Only through the recognition of continuous person can we understand any moral force to any consideration we may have. We feel its horrible for a friend to be in pain, but also think it would be awful for Hitler to live in a state of constant bliss and pleasure. When we estrange ourselves from my concept of identity we lose the capacity to properly situate ourselves.

Extend Shoemaker: Moral categories do not make sense within util: it does not make sense to talk about treating people equally because the way we make sense of that is not an evaluation of the moment, but continuity of an entity across time. Impacts:

a) We need a united agent to see that they are not being treated the same way. Mean you ignores the nature of things like racism – that is not in a black person not getting a job, but rather them repeatedly losing opportunities available to a white person. You do not fathom or care about that unless we have a prior and strong commitment to normative extension over time.

Taylor (2): We cannot reduce human worth to anything other than the human, like experiences or physical properties. Human respect requires intrinsic worth irrespective of physical or visceral descriptions. Impacts:

a) It was the lack of grounding that led racism because “facts” about blacks meant they could be treated differently because of the nature of their experience. Only with an ontological account of the person that grounds moral categories can we have a final response which excludes those meta-narratives that society tells.

b) Ontological estrangement must be resolved before other moral content. Imagine that I came up to you and justified my oppression of black people by saying a recent study confirms historical injustice resulted in dopamine inhibitors such that they do not experience pleasure to my extent. You would object not most strongly based upon the scientific merits of the study, but on the irrelevancy of that in determining moral status. Experience cannot be our grounding of the good.

*AT util does it too:*

Sure, but it's irrelevant; because we are claiming that you need to point our similarities between persons. And in the reductive account persons don't exist. This removes any ability to think about the issue coherently.

Whether the judge can evaluate who is doing the better debating presumes equal ability to debate and gain access to the ballot. Some arguments make the round unsafe for debaters to voice arguments *– thus the prima facie role of the ballot is to maintain the safety of the debate space – it’s a voting issue since it’s a prerequisite to debate itself –* the judge cannot evaluate who is winning under a framework if you exclude others voices. **TEEHAN:[[5]](#footnote-5)** Honestly, I don't think that 99% of what has been said in this thread so far actually matters. It doesn't matter whether you think that these types of assumptions should be questioned. It doesn't matter what accepting this intuition could potentially do or not do. It doesn't matter if you see fit to make, incredibly trivializing and misplaced I might add, links between this and the Holocaust. **All** of the **arguments that talk about how debate is** a **unique** space for questioning assumptions **make an assumption of safety**. They say that this is a space where one is safe to question assumptions and try new perspectives. **That is not true** for everyone. **When we allow arguments that question the wrongness of racism, sexism, homophobia, rape**, lynching, etc., **we make debate unsafe for certain people. The idea that debate is a safe space to question all assumptions is** the definition of **privilege**, it begins with an idea of a debater that can question every assumption. **People who face the actual effects** of the aforementioned things **cannot question those assumptions, and making debate** a space **built around the idea that they can is hostile**. So, you really have a choice. Either 1) say that you do not want these people to debate so that you can let people question the wrongness of everything I listed before, 2) say that you care more about letting debaters question those things than making debate safe for everyone, or 3) make it so that saying things that make debate unsafe has actual repercussions. On "**debate is not the real world**". **Only for people who can separate their existence in "the real world" from their existence in debate.** That means privileged, white, heterosexual males like myself. I don't understand how you can make this sweeping claim when some people are clearly harmed by these arguments. **At the end of the day, you have to figure out whether you care about debate being safe for everyone** involved. I don't think anyone has contested that these arguments make debate unsafe for certain people. If you care at all about the people involved in debate then **don't vote on these arguments**. If you care about the safety and wellbeing of competitors, then don't vote on these arguments. If you don't, then I honestly don't understand why you give up your time to coach and/or judge. The pay can't be that good. I don't believe that you're just in it for the money, which is why I ask you to ask yourselves whether you can justify making debate unsafe for certain people.

Outweighs fairness – you exclude people by not taking account of their speaking position and assuming safety, but there is no prima facie equity in our ability to engage different arguments so it’s a prior question to all-else-considered fairness concerns. *also o/w academic dishonesty since util could justify it.*

Util could justify horrific conclusions, which must be grounds to reject it since it challenges assumptions about **intrinsic, unconditional badness.** No action could be intrinsically bad from this standpoint, even genocide or gruesome torture – this makes debate unsafe by claiming any action is potentially permissible or even **obligatory** if performing it led to better consequences. **ANSCOMBE:[[6]](#footnote-6)** It is a necessary feature of consequentialism that it is a shallow philosophy. For there are always borderline cases in ethics. Now if you are either an Aristotelian, or a believer in divine law, you will deal with a borderline case by considering whether doing such‐and‐such in such‐and‐such circumstances is, say, murder, or is an act of injustice; and according as you decide it is or it isn't, you judge it to be a thing to do or not. This would be the method of casuistry; and while it may lead you to stretch a point on the circumference, it will not permit you to destroy the center. But **if you are a consequentialist, the question "What is** it **right** to do **in such‐and‐such circumstances?" is a stupid one** to raise. The casuist raises such a question only to ask "Would it be permissible to do so‐and‐so?" or "Would it be permissible not to do so‐and‐so?" **Only if it would not be permissible** not to do so‐and‐so **could [s]he say "This would be the thing to do."**[6] **Otherwise, though [s]he may speak against some action, [s]he cannot prescribe [it]** any‐for in an actual case, **the circumstances** (beyond the ones imagined) **might suggest all sorts of possibilities, and you can't know** in advance **what the[y]** possibilities **are going to be. Now the consequentialist [cannot]** has no footing on which to **say "This would be permissible, this not"; because** by his own hypothesis, it is **the consequences** that are to **decide, and [s]he has no business to pretend that [s]he can lay it down what possible twists [one]** a man **could give doing this or that**; the most he can say is: a man must not bring about this or that; he has no right to say he will, in an actual case, bring about such‐and‐such unless he does so‐and‐so. Further, **the consequentialist**, in order to be imagining borderline cases at all, **has** of course **to assume some sort of law or standard according to which this is a borderline case, where then does he get the standard from? In practice the answer invariably is: from the standards current in** his **society** or his circle. And it has in fact been the mark of all these philosophers that they have been extremely conventional; they have nothing in them by which to revolt against the conventional standards of their sort of people; it is impossible that they should be profound. **But the chance that a whole range of conventional standards will be decent is small**.-‐Finally, **the point of** considering **hypothetical situations**, perhaps very improbable ones, **seems to be to elicit** from yourself or someone else **a hypothetical decision to do something of a bad kind.** I don't doubt this has the effect of predisposing people--who will never get into the situations for which they have made hypothetical choices-‐to consent to similar bad actions, or to praise and flatter those who do them, so long as their crowd does so too, when the desperate circumstances imagined don't hold at all.

1. Charles Taylor [A super cool philosopher engaged with both the analytic and continental traditions]. *Sources of the Self*. Harvard University Press. 1989 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. DAVID W. SHOEMAKER [Department of Philosophy, University of Memphis,] “Utilitarianism and Personal Identity” The Journal of Value Inquiry 33: 183–199, 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Charles Taylor [A super cool philosopher engaged with both the analytic and continental traditions]. *Sources of the Self*. Harvard University Press. 1989 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Charles Taylor [A super cool philosopher engaged with both the analytic and continental traditions]. *Sources of the Self*. Harvard University Press. 1989 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ryan Teehan [NSD staffer and competitor from the Delbarton School] – NSD Update comment on the student protests at the TOC in 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Modern Moral Philosophy: G. E. M. Anscombe Originally published in Philosophy 33, No. 124 (January 1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)